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## THEOCRATIC QUEBEC

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It has been said that the privileges which the Catholic church enjoyed in the France of the old régime were conferred upon her as a reward for services against the barbarians. The same may be said of the Catholic church in Quebec, only that the barbarians in this case are the English. From the time of the conquest to the time of Papineau's rebellion competent observers believed that the French-Canadians would lose their nationality. Tocqueville, when he visited America in the early thirties, regarded them as "the wreck of an old people lost in the flood of a new nation." We are told that Garneau, as he "heard the dull booming of the rising tide of the Anglo-Saxon race," wondered if his history of Canada were not after all a funeral oration. That the prophets have been confounded, that the French-Canadians have remained French and clung to the language which they brought from their Norman and Breton homes, is largely the result of clerical leadership.

After the conquest the church became the natural leader of the people. Now that the military and civil officials, the merchants and capitalists, had returned to France, the peasants had nowhere else to look for guidance. Poor, illiterate, altogether untrained in the conduct of public affairs, they confided their future to men who were accustomed to wield authority and to exact obedience and who had every reason to oppose Anglicizing influences. The Catholic clergy were anxious to keep the peasants free from contact with the Protestant English. It was in this way that the peculiarly intimate alliance between clergy and people came about, destined to leave a deep impress upon the institutions and literature of the country. Patriotism and religion were joined together.

Before inquiring what the church has done to justify her assumption of leadership, something must be said of the numerical increase and the distribution of the French-Canadians. Without some knowledge of their phenomenal development it is impossible to appreciate the practical value of clerical leadership or to understand

the gratitude of the people and the tangible form which that gratitude has taken. In 1765 there were, within the present boundaries of Canada, less than 80,000 Frenchmen, descendants of the six thousand settlers who came from the mother country during the century and a half of the old régime. They were a conquered people, deprived of their leaders and without material resources. Since that time they have received no accession of strength from immigration; in the whole of Canada there were less than eight thousand "Français de France" at the opening of this century. Nevertheless, the handful of peasants have increased to more than three millions.<sup>1</sup> Dominant in the province of Quebec, where they constitute eighty per cent of the population (1,322,115 in 1901), they have thrust themselves westward into Ontario, where they control several border countries; eastward to join the resurgent Acadians who now form a quarter of the population of New Brunswick and more than half the population of the six northern counties of that province; and southward into New England where, drawn by economic forces which have now ceased to be operative, they settled in the factory towns, and now form something like a fifth of the population of Vermont, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Careful estimates have shown that there are a million and a half French-Canadians in the United States. But, scattered among a rapidly-increasing population of different origin and no longer fortified by new blood from Quebec, there is little chance of their persistence as a separate nationality even in those parts of New England where they are most numerous.

It is in the cradle of the race, upon the banks of the St. Lawrence, that the hope of the future lies. Quebec is not an English-speaking province and presumably never will be. Nowhere else, in Canada or the United States, is there a people who can so fairly claim to be autochthonous. The French-Canadians, whose blood runs substantially pure and whose language is more nearly that of the seventeenth century than is the language of modern France, have built up in the last three centuries one of the vital resources of a people, a history of which they are proud. They cherish the days of Frontenac and La Galissonnière, of Brébœuf and Daulac des Ormeaux, in a peculiarly intimate way. Those who know the songs they sing and the literature they have produced will under-

<sup>1</sup> The figures given here are based upon the Canadian census of 1901, as the tables showing the distribution of races under the last census are not yet available.

stand how deep their love of the soil goes. As their poet Crémazie wrote in his "Le Canada":

Tu fais rayonner la lumière  
De tes souvenirs glorieux,  
Et tu racontes à la terre  
Les grands exploits de nos aïeux.

All that has happened in Quebec since its cession to the English seems to indicate that assimilation will never take place. Sheltered behind a national organization which has called to its service religion, education, language, literature and national societies, and which is everywhere informed by a deep consciousness of race, the French-Canadians have preserved their distinctive characteristics and have contested successfully with their conquerors for possession of the soil. In the second half of the nineteenth century the English element declined from twenty-five to twenty per cent of the population. In five counties an English population does not exist; in a score of others it falls below five per cent, usually well below. In the country districts the tendency has been for the English majorities, where such existed, to become minorities and sink gradually into insignificance. "The danger of assimilation has completely disappeared," says M. Thomas Côté; "we are the masters of our destinies." The process by which the English have been supplanted upon the soil is best exemplified by the history of the Eastern Townships, the eleven counties which lie between Montreal and the American frontier and which were originally settled by immigrants from Great Britain and the United States. By 1851 the French had become a third of the population of the Townships; by 1861 nearly a half; by 1901 two-thirds. In many an old English center all that remains to show the past is a ruined Protestant church and an overgrown graveyard. If the present tendencies continue, the soil of the Townships will pass entirely to the invader.

What has brought about this movement? Aside from the superior fecundity of the French-Canadians (there is an authentic case of thirty-six children in a family), it cannot be ascribed to their superior energy. Those who know the obstinate conservatism and routine methods of the *habitant* would scout the idea. The truth is that the displacement was voluntary at first, the English-speaking farmer going elsewhere to better his condition, and was afterwards

enforced; and it was enforced, not by any survival of the fittest, but by the organization and activity of the Roman Catholic church. In fact, the church is the main factor in rooting the *habitant* to the soil and keeping him there. Her clearly developed plan, as the *cure* tells his flock in the country parishes, is to make the English and Protestant parts of the province Catholic and French. Colonization societies, in which the clerical element predominates, give assistance to poor colonists, contribute to the cost of churches and schools, and open up new roads. They act as bureaus of information. They know of every farm which has been offered for sale and have one of the faithful ready to occupy it. Behind the church stands the government, subsidizing the societies and contributing to the cause in other ways. The Papal Zouaves were rewarded with a block of township land.

In each locality the same thing happens. One by one the English families leave. One by one, directed by the church, the French families arrive. Finally a time comes when the English, losing their predominance, feel the pressure of the invasion. Left more and more in the minority, they find it hard, then actually impossible, to maintain the one Protestant church which ministers to the various denominations. The children, playing with French children, are in danger of becoming French. Thus the retreat, which was gradual and voluntary at first, finally develops into a frightened rout. Those who remain behind become, like the Highlanders of the county of Charlevoix, French in everything but name. From all parts of the province the English have been converging on the island of Montreal. In the twenty years preceding the census of 1901, although their increase for the province was only 41,500, they added 38,700 to the population of the city alone. To the population of the whole island, which is becoming more and more a mere suburb of the city, they added over 60,000—at the expense, of course, of other English districts. As long as conditions are unaltered this movement will continue. Only in Montreal have the English a position of apparent security and permanence. It is a curious situation. Perhaps in defending Montreal they feel unconsciously that they are defending the last ditch.

Equally notable have been the services of the church in the revival of the Acadian people. With the misfortunes of the Acadians everyone is familiar, whether from the poetry of Longfellow or the

narrative of Parkman. It was generally believed, as late as the middle of the last century, that those misfortunes had destroyed them; in fact the story of their astonishing survival was first recounted to the world in 1887 when Casgrain wrote his "*Pèlerinage au Pays d'Évangéline*." The few hundred peasants who were driven from their homes and scattered over the Atlantic seaboard in 1755 have developed into a vigorous people, proud of their history and confident of the future. They have their own flag, their own national holiday, their own newspapers; and in the public schools they are allowed French books and French teachers. All this is very remarkable; and it was accomplished entirely under the leadership of the church. It has given the church one more claim upon the gratitude of the French-Canadians, because the struggle to preserve a common nationality has obliterated the differences in origin and history which formerly separated the two French peoples of Canada and Acadie.

In order to give the French race and the French language (or, in other words, the Catholic church), a secure position in Quebec, the clergy have unceasingly combated the dangers of assimilation. They have sought to reduce as far as possible the points of contact between English and French. In 1910 the first Plenary Council of Quebec urged parents to keep their children free from dangerous association with Protestants. Some years ago Archbishop Fabre declared that "Catholics who understand their duties and responsibilities toward their children should aim at cutting the evil at the root by discouraging intimate relations with Protestants." His successor, Archbishop Bruchési, has spoken in the same sense. Excommunication lies against any Catholic contracting a marriage before a Protestant minister; and no priest may officiate at a "mixed marriage" between a Catholic and a Protestant unless an episcopal dispensation has been granted. In 1907 Archbishop Bruchési announced that "we will no longer, as in the past, grant dispensations for mixed marriages. Let them not hope to obtain these dispensations because they bring forward the weighty reasons of temporal advantage or mutual affection." For her own reasons the church prevented the establishment of a public library in Montreal in 1903, just as she struck down, a half century ago, the Institut Canadien where English and French radicals met together. Not only has a system of education been developed in which the French have their

own schools and colleges, but attendance at the Protestant English schools, which usually provide a better course of studies and more efficient instruction, is strictly prohibited. The penalty, established by the Councils of Quebec and approved by the Holy See, is refusal of the sacraments; and once a year the attention of the faithful is drawn to this point. The clergy have given every encouragement to the work of purifying the language of intrusive "Anglicisms," a movement which resembles the classical revival in Greece about a century ago. Among French-Canadian authors they have been represented by such men as Abbé Ferland and Abbé Casgrain.

For such notable services against the barbarians the church has received equally notable rewards. Above all, she has received the loyal support and affection of the people she has served. Cardinal Vanutelli, as he passed up the St. Lawrence to represent the Pope at the Eucharistic Congress of 1910, received from every parish on its shores a welcome which could have been equaled in no other country in the world. He said that it reminded him of a day in the Middle Ages. No better description could have been given to the spirit which animates Catholic Quebec. In no way has the church demonstrated her influence so impressively as in supervising the people's theatrical amusements and their reading. In the rôle of public censor she has destroyed powerful newspapers and muzzled others, disciplined the managers of theaters, forced authors to withdraw their books, and banished from the shops and libraries the novels of Honoré Balzac and the poems of Alfred de Musset. Why do newspapers like *La Presse* publish edifying discourses on the eucharist? Why is Montreal, the metropolis of Canada, unprovided with a public library? Why is the Théâtre de Nouveautés, once the home of good drama, given over to the exhibition of moving pictures? It is because episcopal interdicts, even at this day, are enforced by a sanction as effective as that which stands behind the laws of the state. The interdict may be dead in other countries, but it flourishes in Quebec. Observing the results of its employment, the mind travels back to the days of Innocent III.

Innumerable illustrations of this clerical censorship might be given. Allusion has been made to the Théâtre des Nouveautés. A few years ago, after being censured by the Archbishop on account of an objectionable production, the manager gave his word that no immoral play would ever be given in the theatre again. Not long

afterwards Bernstein's *La Rafale* was announced. This play, according to the Archbishop, "is nothing but a display of low sensuality and an apology for suicide." The theatre was promptly interdicted, not only for the week during which the play was to run, but indefinitely. All the French papers refrained from criticism of the play. An audience which was almost entirely English attended on the first evening; on the second the doors were closed; on the third the manager wrote to the Archbishop asking to have the interdict removed. It was removed, but on condition that the posting of plays should henceforth be approved by a committee of clerical censors. Shortly afterwards legitimate drama gave way to moving pictures.

Among the many newspapers which have fallen under archiepiscopal displeasure may be noted *Les Débats*, *Le Combat*, and *L'Action* which appeared successively between 1899 and 1904. They were managed and edited by Edouard Charlier, an old-country Frenchman, who had little knowledge of the limitations placed upon the freedom of the press in Quebec. He spoke violently against "the brutal invasion of the Transvaal," and was not molested. But when he eulogized certain dangerous French authors, mocked the Syllabus, attacked the memory of Archbishop Bourget at the moment when the diocese was erecting a monument to him, and ridiculed a letter of Archbishop Bruchési regarding Sunday observance, he found the church less patient under criticism than the state had been. The faithful were prohibited from buying *Les Débats*, selling it, or having it in possession. The paper ceased publication. Immediately afterwards Charlier launched another weekly called *Le Combat*. "It resembles its brother," cried a clerical organ in Montreal; "we are forced to believe in metempsychosis!" Indeed, in its short and merry career *Le Combat* gave good evidence that it possessed the spirit of the departed. There was little disguise of the fact that its dominating idea was hatred of the clergy and that it wished to warn the people against everything which savored of clerical control. Again the thunderbolt fell. And again, after reading the Archbishop a little lecture, M. Charlier managed to transfer the old spirit to a new body. *L'Action*, however, did not survive its first number. More famous was the case of *Le Canada-Revue* which, ruined by the interdict in 1892, carried its grievances to the courts only to find that no redress could be obtained. The Archbishop was held to have acted within his rights.



Much may be said in justification of clerical censorship. The church has undertaken a responsibility which the state has failed to assume. She has labored conscientiously to keep the people clean, to protect home life, to preserve simple manners and innocent tastes; and the high level of morality—using the word in its narrower sense—which prevails among the French population of Quebec bears good testimony to her services in the discharge of a great trust. Too often, in the clamor raised over her mistakes and her selfish behavior, that achievement has been overlooked. But it would be quite as wrong to overlook instances of excessive zeal and unnecessary oppression, acts of violence done where no public interest appeared to be at stake and where the battle was fought from the questionable motive of preserving power or punishing *leze majesty*.

The dangers of clerical censorship must be fairly obvious, even to those who are not familiar with its actual operation. The church is an irresponsible organization, asserting over civil society an authority ordained by divine will, resisting with all her power any attempt to diminish that authority, and resenting every word of criticism and every act of resistance. The educational system of Quebec, for instance, having fallen under the control of the clergy, is invested by them with a quasi-religious character; and to touch "the sacred arch of education," as Senator Poirier ironically calls it, or to discuss glaring defects and pressing reforms with any degree of frankness requires a good deal of courage; the church will at once assume that the criticism is leveled against herself. How then will it fare with those who throw discredit upon the teaching of the church,—as was impliedly done in Bernstein's *Rafale*—or bring to light scandals in the ranks of the clergy themselves, as was done by *Le Canada-Revue*? "Prick lightly the skin of an ecclesiastic, even in his first year," said Arthur Buies; "and the whole church puffs out, makes a great noise, and launches her thunderbolts."

That these thunderbolts are effective is due, of course, to the attitude of obedience and acquiescence which prevails among the people. But to many acts of the clergy the state has undertaken to give a legal sanction. Thus, parish priests are not supported by voluntary offerings, but by payment of the tithe which the civil courts will enforce; and churches are not built by popular subscription, but by levying a regular tax upon the freeholders of the parish and collecting it by legal process if necessary. The tithe, which has

always existed in Canada, amounts to a twenty-sixth of the harvested cereals; in some parts of the province it has been extended to include hay. In cases where it is insufficient to support the priest or where the heads of families pay no tithe at all, which applies particularly to towns and cities, it is customary to levy a kind of personal tithe known as the capitation; and apparently the courts will enforce its payment. It should also be noted that the organization of the parish and its administration are regulated by statute. There is no real separation of church and state in Quebec.

In the same way the state has legalized the ascendancy of the church in educational matters. Under the system of separate schools which was established nearly three-quarters of a century ago the control of Catholic schools has been entrusted to a committee which the bishops of the province absolutely dominate. The bishops are directly responsible, therefore, for the studies which are prescribed and for the books which are authorized. Under their hands the main purpose of the primary schools seems to be to prepare children for their first communion. "Religious instruction shall hold the principal place among the subjects of the course," the regulations say, "and shall be regularly given in every school. The catechism lessons of children preparing for their first communion shall receive special attention. When it is deemed necessary, children preparing for their first communion shall be exempted from a part of their other class exercises." As the parish priest has the right to visit the school, inspect all documents, and both choose the books and direct the teacher in all matters of religion and morals, the regulations are well enforced. In the language of a competent observer the catechism "forms the staple of the course of study, with a little of the three R's in the intervals between it and prayers." After the first communion few—of the boys at least—continue to attend school.

The inefficiency of the primary schools is patent, even appalling. "We are ready to acknowledge," says the *Montreal Witness*, "that, compared with ideal conditions, our attitude toward education is disgraceful and, further, that in these days of necessary competition with all other peoples it involves a national peril." The incompetency of the teachers may be proved sufficiently from the reports of the school inspectors. "One-half the teachers seem ignorant of the first ideas of the course of studies," we read. "There are

thirty-seven who have no diplomas and who, with few exceptions, teach only a little reading and writing as well as the catechism to the children preparing for the first communion." "There are too many persons who have no vocation for teaching and are accepted because no better ones can be got." It should be noted that 4,600 monks and nuns are teaching in the public schools without diplomas. They are exempted by statute from the necessity of securing diplomas, an exemption for which they give no guarantee of efficiency. In the primary schools where the teachers are almost entirely women the average salary of a woman teacher possessing a diploma is \$177 in the towns and \$125 in the country. A bricklayer earns in an hour twice as much as one of these teachers earns in a day.

In higher education the French-Canadians seldom go afield from their own university, Laval, and the nineteen classical colleges which are affiliated with it. These are entirely under clerical domination. Laval, though raised to the status of a university only in the middle of the nineteenth century, can boast of a long history, beginning with the foundation of the *Petit Séminaire* in 1668. It does not belie its ecclesiastical origin. The final supervision of doctrine and discipline rests with a Superior Council composed of the archbishops and bishops of the civil province, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Quebec, who, besides being Apostolic Chancellor and Visitor, enjoys the power of veto over all rules and nominations. At the opening of the year the professors go to the archiepiscopal palace and deposit at the feet of the Visitor their oath of fidelity. Frenchmen who have come out to occupy the chairs of French literature established through the efforts of Abbé Colin, Superior of the Sulpicians in Montreal, have found their position intolerable. One, beginning his course with the nineteenth century, was forced to change to the seventeenth. There was great scandal when de Labriolle delivered a eulogy on Paul Louis Courier, and when M. Leger made references to Zola and Anatole France. In 1904, when a medical congress holding its sessions at Laval resolved that all teachers, even those in orders, ought to have a certificate of health, the vice-rector at first closed the doors against the doctors, though he was finally prevailed upon to rescind the order. The students are forbidden to make use of any library other than that of the university itself, which is certainly not calculated to undermine their morals or their orthodoxy. Laval has a branch at Montreal which

was founded in 1876 and has outgrown the mother institution, becoming practically independent.

The classical colleges are formed after a pattern taken from the old world. Children may enter at the age of seven and eventually proceed to the bachelor's degree or enter the church. Little more than forty per cent of the students are above sixteen years of age. Practically all the instructors are in orders. The students are all formed in the same mold, and subjected to a discipline that too often breaks their spirit and initiative. Their education is classical, even to the point of having classes conducted in Latin. Modern literature and modern philosophy are eschewed.

Already criticism, insistent criticism, is being directed against these homes of obscurantism, not only by radical reformers, but also by men whose temperament is conservative and whose attachment to the church still survives. Their assault on the school system is fundamental. It is in the schools that the clergy take hold of the young and mold them to obedience. They exercise almost complete control; prescribing the studies, authorizing the books, and bringing to bear upon the students influences which are calculated to leave a permanent impress. In fact, the schools of Quebec develop loyalty to the church in the same way that the schools of other countries develop loyalty to the state. The radicals, who wish to break the spell of clerical ascendancy over the people, aim more immediately at modernizing the schools and relieving the French-Canadians of the handicap of inferior education. Hence the agitation for a Minister of Education, in the place of the bishops, and for free and obligatory instruction. "It is indisputably established," said the clerical organ *La Vérité*, "that obligatory instruction is preached by the Freemasons especially, and that the countries which have allowed this measure to be imposed on them have demonstrated its failure. . . . It is by means of obligatory instruction above all that the adversaries of religious instruction hope to take the child from paternal authority and the salutary influence of the church, in order to throw him into the arms of the state." It must be admitted that "the salutary influence of the church" is the chief point of attack. That salutary influence, far from taking the lead in effecting necessary reforms, has thrown its mantle about the schools and made criticism a sacrilege. It is dangerous to criticise or even to suggest improvements; and so a growing number of radi-

cals believe that the schools must be laicized before they can be made efficient.

It is in Montreal, where Protestant and Catholic schools stand side by side inviting comparison and where competition in commerce and industry makes the French feel the inadequacy of their training, that the reform movement has gathered most headway. The Board of School Commissioners, though the ecclesiastical members dissented, established a short while ago practical freedom of instruction and uniformity of books. Previously the religious orders had made some profit, *ad maiorem dei gloriam*, as *Le Pays* remarked irreverently, by getting authorization for the books which they printed and sold without any taxation by the state. But the great victory of the radical programme, apparently the first step in a revolution, was the founding of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales* in 1908. It is true that an Abbé of the church blessed the corner-stone; but the ceremony was strangely free from the usual clerical tone, and the school itself is entirely under lay control. The members of the governing corporation are nominated by the French-Canadian Chamber of Commerce and appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor.

The significance of this will appear best from the comments of the clerical papers. Said *La Vérité*: "We see in the constitution of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* that the representatives of religious authority have been completely overlooked. They have been excluded from an institution in which, however, they ought to have a voice in certain branches of the prescribed programme of studies. There is an unfortunate tendency to exaggerate the rights of the state in education to the detriment of the rights of the church." What "the rights of the state" are may be gathered from the declaration of the Superintendent of Public Instruction that the sole right of the state in matters of education is to furnish the funds. "Before sending their children to this school," said *L'Action Sociale*, "Catholics will wish to assure themselves that its atmosphere is not deleterious. If the atmosphere is poisoned with neutrality, parents and children will go elsewhere. . . . The church has the right to complain if she and all religion are excluded positively from an establishment where neither the director nor the professors admit her influence and her authority."

In still another direction the authority of the church has been clothed with legal sanction. In their interpretation of the Civil

Code of the province the courts have long recognized her full pretensions in the regulation of the marriage tie. Down to the year 1901 it seemed thoroughly established that, in deciding on the validity of an alleged marriage between two Catholics, the courts should be guided by the decision of the competent ecclesiastical tribunal and reserve to themselves only the right of pronouncing as to the civil effects,—marriage portion, right of succession, etc. In that year, however, the case of *Delpit v. Côté* came before the Superior Court. The parties, though both Catholic, had been married before a Unitarian minister in Montreal. The plaintiff, claiming that, in accordance with ecclesiastical rules, the marriage should have been celebrated in a Catholic church and before the proper priest of one of the parties, secured a decree of nullity from the Archbishop. He then demanded, and in the light of precedent had every right to expect, annulment by the court as to the civil effects. The court took a very different view, a view which was received with consternation by the clergy. It held that "the marriage upon a license of two Roman Catholics by a Protestant minister is not illegal as having been solemnized by an incompetent official." This decision was rendered by Judge Archibald, an English judge. But although a French judge rendered a contrary judgment on a similar point a month and a half later, it seems from a very recent decision that through the force of its argument and its reliance on broad principles of law that *Delpit v. Côté* will leave its impress upon the jurisprudence of the future. The slowly-developing spirit of anti-clericalism has begun to make itself felt upon the bench.

Anti-clerical sentiment is growing in Quebec. Excessive pretensions, intemperate craving for power, the determination of the clergy to make their will dominant where modern practice allows freedom of choice to the individual—these things have raised up enemies. "If the chiefs of the church heard the talk to which these abuses give rise," wrote Senator David, "if they knew what good Catholics and irreproachable parents are repeating freely, they would be frightened. Unhappily the truth reaches them with difficulty, through the smoke of the incense which envelops them; respect and fear of displeasing them or giving them **pain** too often close the mouths of the worthy men who surround them. . . . The danger which menaces the influence of the clergy and of religion itself is great, serious, incontestable." French-Canadians

are beginning to wonder if clerical dictatorship has not become an anachronism; if the large powers which were entrusted to the church at a time when the very existence of the nationality was in peril should not be recalled now that the circumstances have changed. To-day their danger is mainly economic; and the church has shown no disposition to meet the danger by raising the standard of education and giving it the practical character which would prepare the students for industrial or commercial careers. She is too much concerned with the preservation of her powers and with the enforcement of obedience at the expense of individual initiative and self-reliance. She is not disposed to lay down her dictatorship like a Garibaldi or a Cincinnatus. The result is that the French-Canadian Freemasons, converted by missionaries from France and possessed of all the conviction of early Christians, are meeting secretly in the catacombs to plot her destruction.